Basic Values, Ideological Self-Placement, and Voting : A Cross-Cultural Study

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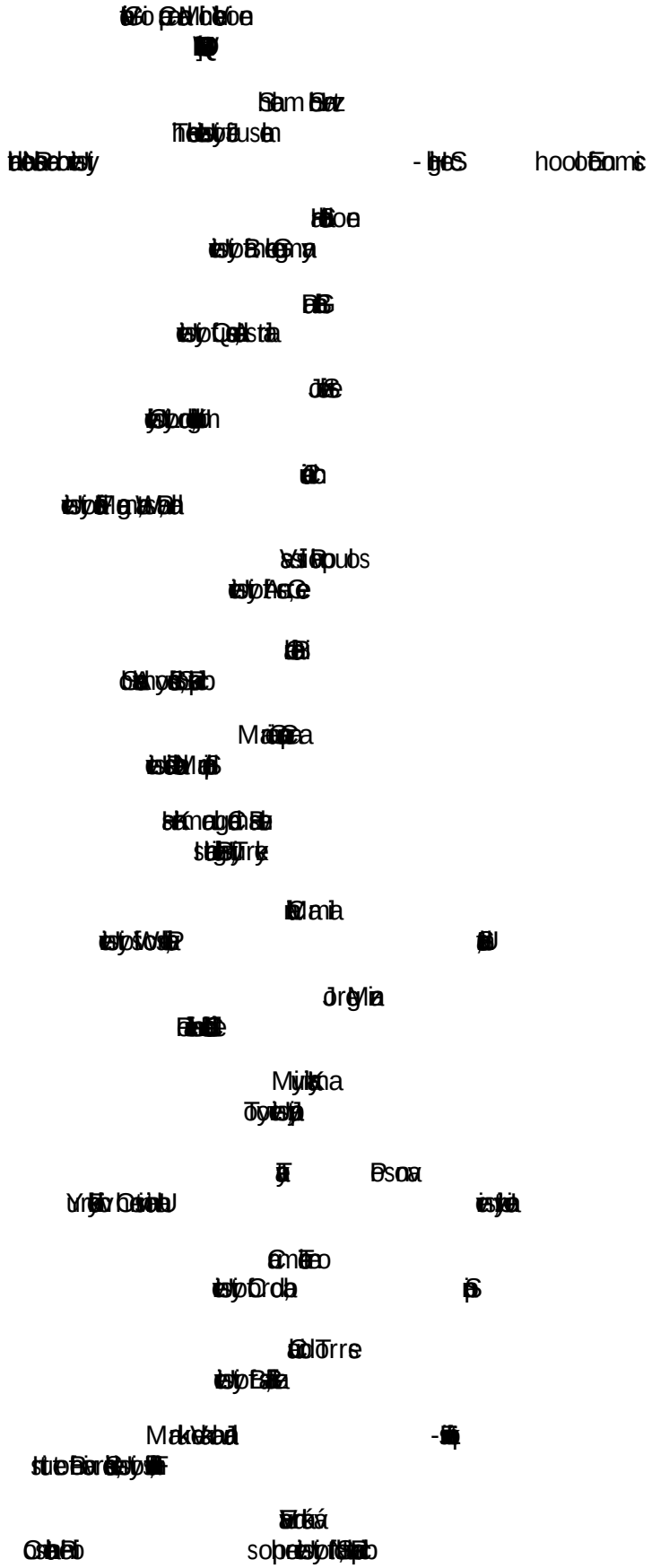

Abstract

Basic values, ideological self-placement, and voting: A cross-cultural study

The long-term debate about the social structural factors that shape the nature of political conflict has been a subject of great interest for contemporary political sociologists (e.g., Bell, 1960; Lipset, 1960). The fact that the traditional class-based models of political conflict have been challenged by the rise of new political issues, such as environmentalism, feminism, and ethnic identity politics, has led to a reformulation of the theoretical models that have been used to explain political behavior in advanced industrial societies. Many of these models have focused upon the role that basic social values, such as materialism/post-materialism, play in shaping political attitudes and behavior (e.g., Inglehart, 1977, 1990; Abramson and Inglehart, 1995). Others have argued that ideological self-placement (e.g., left-right) is the most important factor that shapes political behavior (e.g., Klingemann, 1995; Fuchs and Klingemann, 1989). Still others have argued that political behavior is shaped by a combination of social values and ideological self-placement (e.g., Dalton, 1988; Knutsen, 1995). Some of these studies have been limited to the United States (e.g., Abramson and Inglehart, 1995), while others have been limited to Western Europe (e.g., Knutsen, 1995). Some have been limited to a single country (e.g., Dalton, 1988), while others have been limited to a single year (e.g., Fuchs and Klingemann, 1989). Some have been limited to a single political behavior (e.g., voting), while others have been limited to a single political attitude (e.g., left-right self-placement). Some have been limited to a single social value (e.g., materialism/post-materialism), while others have been limited to a single ideological self-placement (e.g., left-right). Some have been limited to a single social value and a single ideological self-placement, while others have been limited to a single political behavior and a single political attitude. Some have been limited to a single social value and a single political behavior, while others have been limited to a single ideological self-placement and a single political attitude. Some have been limited to a single social value and a single political attitude, while others have been limited to a single ideological self-placement and a single political behavior. Some have been limited to a single social value and a single political behavior and a single political attitude, while others have been limited to a single ideological self-placement and a single political behavior and a single political attitude.

This paper will examine the relationship between basic social values, ideological self-placement, and political behavior in a cross-cultural context. The

Methods

Participants and Procedures

Measures

Ideology. Ideology was measured in two ways. First

talk about conservatives and liberals. How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?. Alternatives ranged from 1 (Extremely liberal) to 7 (Extremely conservative). The second was a self-placement item on the left-right VFDOH ³,Q SROLWLFDO PDWWHUV WDONV DERXW SHRSOH ZKR DUH FRQVLGHUHG ´OHIW´ DQG ´ULJKW´ +RZ would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking'´ Alternatives ranged from 1 (Left) to 10 (Right). We used the liberal-conservative scale in the U.K. and the U.S., and the left-right scale in all other countries. This decision was based on input from the country collaborators about the common usage in their countries. The left-right item was rescaled to a 7-point scale, to have the same range of the liberal-conservative scale.

Voting. We measured political choice directly by asking participants which party they had voted for in the most recent national election. We included parties with at least 25 voters in the analysis. To maximize the number of cases in the analysis, researchers in nine out of sixteen countries combined small parties (ns < 25) with larger parties or with one another, based on the similarity of their ideological orientations. Voting was coded as an ordered categorical variable, by positioning political parties along the left-right continuum. The number of categories varied across nations, from two (U.S.) to six (Israel), depending on the number of political parties that were considered.

Values. The PVQ (Schwartz, 2005) measured basic values. It includes 40 short verbal SRUWUDLWV RI GLIIHUHQW SHRSOH PDWFKHG WR WKH UHVS DVSLUDWLRQV RU ZLVKHV WKDW SRLQW LPSOLFLWO\ WR WKH LPSRUWDQFH RI YDOXHV WR WKH SHUVRQ EHLQJ GHVFULEHG ´7KLQNLQJ RI new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes to do things in his own original way' describes a person who holds self-direction values important. Three to six items measure each value. For each portrait, respondents indicate how similar the person is to themselves on a scale ranging IURP ³QRW OLNH PH DW DOO´ WR ³YHU\ PXFK OLNH PH ´ :H H implicit values of the people they consider similar to themselves (e.g. WKH FXUUHQW VWXG\ alpha reliabilities averaged across the sixteen samples ranged from .62 (Tradition) to .89 (Universalism).

Results

Ideological self-placement and voting

The left panel of Table 2 reports country means and standard deviations on the left-right and the liberal-conservative scales. Participants with missing data on ideological self-placement (3.6% of the total sample) were excluded from the analysis.[1] The mean of left-right ideology ranged across countries from 3.38 (Australia) to 6.23 (Poland). The mean score of liberal-conservative self-placement was 3.12 in the UK, and 3.9 in the US. The right panel of Table 2 reports Spearman's correlations of ideological self-placement with voting. Correlations were significant in all countries except Ukraine. The preference for a left-wing (or liberal) ideology was consistently associated with voting for left-wing parties. According to Cohen's (1988) standards, correlations were large in Australia, Brazil, Finland, Germany, Greece, Israel, Italy, Spain, Turkey, and the United States, moderate in Chile, Poland, Slovakia, and United Kingdom, and small in Japan.

The contribution of basic values to ideological self-placement

We used a multilevel regression analysis to investigate the unique contribution of the ten values to ideology in the overall sample, controlling for basic socio-demographic variables (gender, age, income, and education). This approach, often referred to as random coefficient model (Kreft & De Leeuw, 1998), takes into account the nested nature of the data (individuals are nested within countries). It permits examining the effect of individual-level variables on ideological self-placement, without incurring problems typically associated with the use of ordinary least squares regression with nested data. It also allows examining whether these effects vary significantly across countries.

In a first step we estimated an empty model, which only includes the intercept. This model was estimated to calculate the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) of ideological self-placement.

[1] The percentage of missing cases for each country were: 0.0% in Australia, 1.7% in Brazil, 3.6% in Chile, 2.0% in Finland, 8.8% in Germany, 1.1% in Greece, 1.7% in Israel, 4.8% in Italy, 8.5% in Japan, 3.1% in Poland, 2.1% in Slovakia, 2.1% in Spain, 6.0% in Turkey, 2.0% in Ukraine, 0.0% in the United Kingdom, and 6.4% in the United States.

The ICC was .08, indicating that 8% of the total variance in ideology was accounted for by differences between countries.

We then estimated a random-intercept model, which adds level-1 explanatory variables (i.e., basic personal values and socio-demographic variables). We centered the ten values and the continuous demographic variables on their group means. Gender was coded as 0 (female) and 1 (male). Results showed that the three conservation values (security, b = .16, p<.001; tradition b = .10, p<.001; and conformity b = .10, p<.001), predicted a preference for right/conservative ideology (a higher score on the scale). Power (b = .05, p<.01) and stimulation (b = .05, p<.01) were also related to a preference for right/conservative ideology, although to a lesser extent. Universalism (b = -.31, p<.001) and hedonism (b = -.07, p<.01) predicted a preference for left/liberal ideology (a lower score on the scale). Among the demographics, education (b=-.01, p.<05), and income (b= -.06, p<.01) predicted a preference for left/liberal ideology.

Figure 2 reports a full set of unstandardized regression coefficients for personal values. As can be observed, the coefficients followed the motivational circle of values, declining from security to universalism in both directions. All these relationships, except for in the case of universalism, were quite weak. This figure, however, reflects the overall effects on ideology across the sixteen samples. Allowing the relationship between ideology and values to vary across countries we found that the effects of five values (conformity, security, tradition, universalism, and power) varied significantly (p<.01). This suggests that the same pattern cannot be generalized to all countries. We therefore performed separate analyses for each sample, using OLS multiple regression.

Table 3 presents the unique contribution of values to ideological self-placement in each country, controlling for the effect of the demographic variables. Given the high number of tests being performed, we applied a Bonferroni correction to determine whether each of the ten regression coefficient was significant in each country (i.e., the critical level of significance was set at .01). We found that universalism values predicted a preference for left/liberal ideology in all countries, except Ukraine and Slovakia. Security, tradition, and conformity values predicted a

preference for right/conservative ideology in most countries. The effects of the other values were weaker and much less consistent across countries.

To evaluate the degree of deviation from the overall pattern, we calculated the correlation between the ten regression coefficients derived from aggregated data and the regression coefficients estimated in each country.[2] These correlations were significant ($p < .05$) in 13 of 16 countries, revealing a substantial homogeneity in the effect that values exerted on ideology (Table 3, last column). In the post-communist countries, by contrast, these correlations were considerably lower and not significant.[3]

The incremental contribution of basic values, after controlling for the effect of the demographics, was substantial in most samples. In Western and Southern European countries, the R-squared ranged from .18 (Germany) to .32 (Finland). A similar effect was found in non-European countries, where the R-squared varied between .21 (Japan) and .26 (Australia). The smallest contribution was observed in the three Post-communist countries, where the R-squared ranged from .05 (Slovakia) to .09 (Poland).

Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the association between ideological self-placement and voting, as well as the pattern of relations between these variables and basic values. Ideological self-placement across 16 countries that differ widely in their traditions, cultural and historical roots. Ideology is the strongest predictor of voting in all countries except for Ukraine. The highest correlations (.70 or higher) were observed in Chile, East Germany, Israel, Italy, and Spain, where ideological self-placement serves as a virtual proxy for vote choice. This pattern of results suggests that claims of the end of ideology and the decline of the right and left divide have been prematurely announced, as already noted by Jost (2006). Although the underlying principles are

[2] To avoid inflated coefficients, Pearson's correlations for each country were based on aggregate data from which the examined country was excluded. We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this procedure.

[3] Preliminary analysis showed that multicollinearity diagnostics were in the acceptable range (VIF values were higher than .8 in each country, which is far above the acceptable limit of .1, see Cohen, Cohen & Aiken, 2003).

complex and difficult to grasp, the traditional left-right distinction still serves as useful heuristic device that helps voters to organize political knowledge, to assess political programs, to structure their judgments and to make their choices (Sears, Lau, Tyler, & Allen, 1980). Likely right and left are ideological labels that have an intrinsic value, even if they do not always share the same meanings and carry the same priorities across different polities. Yet, they may act as attractors that, at collective level, enable people to take position with others and to strengthen consensus.

This occurs in established democracies where citizens are accustomed to voting as an act that is both symbolic and expressive and that goes beyond contingent interests. People vote despite being aware their single vote is almost irrelevant with respect to the final outcome of an election. People vote regardless of their position in society as voting attest to the personal and social identity they cherish, to their being persons worthy of respect, to the equal dignity of their views as citizens, and to their belongingness and inclusiveness (Caprara, 2008). In this, ideology is the device that allows people to cope with complexity and that meet the two fundamental needs of human existence, agency (DQG F R P P X Q L R Q Q D P H O \ W K H Q H H G V W R H [H U W F community.

The power of ideology in accounting for voting holds also in post-communist societies like Poland and Slovakia, although to a lesser extent. In these countries, the demise of socialist ideals has carried tremendous changes in the political landscape. Ukraine constituted the only country that showed no relation between ideology and voting. One may speculate about the different historical vicissitudes and political traditions of this country, which may account for its being an outlier, even with regard to Poland and Slovakia.

The pattern of relationship of ideological self-placement with basic values revealed that the critical trade-off underlying ideology is between values concerned with tolerance and protection for the welfare of all people (universalism) versus values concerned with preserving the social order and status quo (security).

Universalism and security are located on opposite sides of the motivational circle of values

(Schwartz, 1992), as they express conflicting motivations, that seems to correspond closely to liberalism and social welfare .vs social conservatism Universalism values call for promoting the welfare of others even at cost to the self Moreover, they express concern for the weak, those most likely to suffer from market-driven policies. Security values emphasize preserving the social order The trade-off between these two values seems to capture particularly well the ideological divide most countries (e.g., Braithwaite, 1997; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski & Sulloway, 2003).

It is remarkable that similar results hold across countries, despite the different trajectories to democracy and the diversities of contents that can be traced under the same ideological labels. A notable exception was found in post-communist countries, especially in Ukraine and Slovakia, where relations of values with ideology were near to zero. In this regard, one may speculate about the different historical vicissitudes and political traditions of these countries, even with regard to other post-communist countries, like Poland. It is possible that the experience of communism in these countries has erased memories of past democratic regimes, and that the profound changes following its collapse resulted in confusion about the definition of left and right. Future studies should further investigate the extent to which past and contingent ideological forces impinge on voting among post-communist countries whose transition to democratic institutions is still far from being fully achieved.

When interpreting the results of this study potential limitations should be considered, attributable to sampling or methodological artifacts. A first limitation is that participants were from convenience samples, except for Germany and Turkey. Thus one F D Q ¶ W J H Q H U D O L] H R X the entire countries population. For example, participants included in our samples of convenience were more educated, wealthier, and urban than the general population. Yet, the patterns of findings in national samples were largely consistent with those from samples of convenience. Moreover, we cannot exclude that differences across countries in the strength of the effects was due, at least in part, by differences in the reliability of the measures. A further limitation is the limited number of countries, which did not allow us to investigate the role of cultural level variables in moderating the

strength of the relations between values and ideology. Future studies, using a higher number of representative samples from over the world, are needed to investigate the role of different country-level variables, such as economic development of the country, level of democratization, type and importance of religion (for a similar approach, see for instance, Bond et al., 2004).

Despite the above limitations, we believe that this study is informative regarding the relationship among basic values, ideological orientation, and voting in a variety of representative democracies. The relatively consistent pattern of covariation between these variables suggests that political ideology has a common core of meaning, despite the diversity of left/liberal and right/conservative policies across countries.

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Table 1.Description of the samples.

Country	N	% Female	Meanage (SD)	Mean years of education (SD)[a]	Median household income [b]
Australia	285	54%	36.1 (13.9)	16.6 (3.6)	3
Brazil	995	56%	34.1 (9.0)	19.1 (4.1)	2
Chile	415	50%	43.3 (13.4)	15.8 (4.2)	3
Finland	428	68%	40.1 (13.2)	16.2 (4.3)	4
Germany	1066	46%	53.7(16.4)	14.6 (4.4)	4
Greece	374	48%	41.9 (12.0)	15.3 (3.5)	3
Israel	478	57%	38.6 (12.7)	15.6 (3.0)	4
Italy	557	56%	38.7 (13.9)	15.3 (3.7)	4
Japan	364	54%	44.6 (139)	14.5 (2.5)	3
Poland	699	56%	36.6 (130)	15.1 (30)	4
Slovakia	485	51%	47.7 (14.6)	144 (3.3)	5
Spain	420	54%	37.7 (14.8)	14.3 (3.1)	4
Turkey	512	46%	37.7 (13.2)	11.4 (3.3)	5
Ukraine	735	48%	41.1 (12.6)	14.0 (3.3)	4
United Kingdom	469	64%	36.7 (12.1)	14.2 (2.9)	2
United States	543	56%	32.6 (14.4)	14.0 (2.2)	4

Notes [a] Include compulsory years of schooling; [b] Income was measured with the following scale: 1=very much above the average of your country 2=above the average, 3=a little above average, 4=about average, 5=a little below the average, 6=below the average, 7=very much below the average.

Table 2 Ideological self-placement: Means and standard deviations, and correlations with voting.

Country	Mean (SD)	Pearson's r with voting
Australia	3.38 (1.54)	.56**
Chile	4.98 (2.14)	.48**
Brazil	4.62 (1.88)	.70**
Finland	5.11 (2.17)	.67**
Germany	4.66 (1.67)	.64**
Greece	4.46 (2.00)	.61**
Israel	5.11 (2.40)	.80**
Italy	4.93 (2.56)	.74**
Japan	5.44 (1.36)	.16*
Poland	6.23 (2.25)	.49**
Slovakia	5.47 (2.03)	.39**
Spain	4.68 (2.37)	.75**
Turkey	5.64 (2.49)	.60**
Ukraine	5.31 (1.67)	-.01
United Kingdom	3.12 (1.38)	.42**
United States	3.90 (1.32)	.54**

Notes: * $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$. We used the liberal-conservative scale in the U.K. and the U.S., and the left-right scale in the other countries. Higher means indicate self-placement further to the right and to the conservative poles.

Table 3. Standardized OLS regression coefficients relating basic values to ideological self-placement

	SE	CO	TR	BE	UN	SD	ST	HE	AC	PO	R^2	Similarity with the overall pattern
Australia	.23**	.07	.14	.03	-.24**	-.10	.16	-.15	-.01	.18*	.26	.86**
Brazil	.16**	.12**	.12**	.04	-.32**	-.03	.02	-.09	.05	.10*	.17	.93**
Chile	.14	.22**	.00	.06	-.30**	.07	.02	.03	-.07	.09	.20	.71**
Finland	.25**	.19**	.02	.06	-.41**	.02	.15**	-.09	.02	.06	.32	.84**
Germany	.24**	.04	.25**	-.05	-.32**	.07	.07	-.06	-.09	.03	.18	.95**
Greece	.20**	-.05	.31**	-.02	-.37**	.06	.00	.05	.08	.02	.29	.86**
Israel	.22**	-.02	.42**	-.01	-.31**	.05	.11	-.03	-.04	.03	.31	.90**
Italy	.23**	.07	.14**	.05	-.38**	.04	-.09	.00	.11	.10	.27	.83**
Japan	.24**	.04	.19**	.00	-.24**	-.11	.10	-.10	.00	.05	.12	.92**
Poland	.12*	-.09	.24**	.02	-.15*	.13	.02	-.09	-.01	-.13	.09	.62*
Slovakia	-.10	-.09	.04	.09	-.01	-.03	.03	-.11	-.04	.06	.05	.04
Spain	.05	.18*	.15	.09	-.32**	-.10	.12	-.01	-.10	.11	.22	.83**
Turkey	.12	.00	.19**	-.03	-.17**	-.11	.02	-.06	-.07	.07	.13	.88**
U.K.	.23**	.03	.24**	-.03	-.35**	-.08	.06	-.06	.01	.09	.30	.98**
Ukraine	.01	.04	.10*	-.11*	.01	.08	.17**	-.03	-.03	-.03	.06	.24
U.S.	.03	.14	.22**	.08	-.29**	-.06	.10	-.03	-.01	.02	.16	.88**

Notes: *p<.01; **p<.001; SE= Security; CO= Conformity; TR= Tradition; BE= Benevolence; UN= Universalism; SD= Self-direction; ST= Stimulation; HE= Hedonism; AC= Achievement; PO= Power

Figure 1 6 F K Z D U W] ¶ V F L U F X O D U P R G H O R I Y

Figure 2. Unstandardized regression coefficients relating basic values to ideology in multilevel analysis (positive coefficients signify that a value is related to a preference for right/conservative ideology, and vice versa)

Sec = security; con = conformity; tra = tradition; ben = benevolence; uni = universalism; self-direction; sti = stimulation; hed = hedonism; ach = achievement; pow = power.

Appendix. Political parties, ordered from left to right, and number of voters for each

Country	N	Parties
Australia	252	Greens (n=67); Labor Party (n=115); Liberal and Nationals combined (n=70).
Brazil	693	Partito dos Trabalhadores (PT) and Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (PTB) combined (n=447); Partido Democràtico Trabalhista (PDT) (n=44); Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira (PSDB) (n=174); Partido do Movimento Democràtico Brasileiro (PMDB) and Partido Progressista (PP) combined (n=28).
Finland	368	Left Alliance, Green League, and Social Democratic Party combined (n=226); Centre party (n=45); Christian Democrats, Swedish Peoples party, National Coalition party, and Basic Finnish party combined (n=97).
Chile	266	Partido Por la Democracia (PPD) (n=45); Partido Socialista (PS) (n=30); Partido Demócrata Cristiano (PDC) (n=55); Renovación Nacional (RN) (n=103); Unión Demócrata Independiente (UDI) (n=33).
Germany	795	Die Linke (n=43); Alliance '90/The Greens (n=130); Social Democratic Party (SPD) (n=255); CDU/CSU (n=306); Free Democratic Party (FDP) (n=61).
Greece	263	K.K.E. (n=29); SYRIZA (n=40); Greens (n=25); PASOK (n=124); New Democracy (n=45).
Israel	362	Meretz ±the new movement (n=56); Avoda-Meimad (n=73); Kadima (n=93); Likud (n=81); HaBa'it Hayehudi- , F K X G / H X P L 6 K D V D Q G combined (Religious-Mafdal, n=32); Israel Bei'tenu (n=27).
Italy	479	The Italian Marxist and Leninist Party; R U N H U V ¶ & P P X Q L V W Party, the Italian Communist Party, Rainbow Left, and the Greens combined (n=32); Democratic Party (n=226); Italy of Values (n=40); UdC, UDEUR, and La Rosa Bianca combined (n=25); People of Freedom Party (n=136), the Movement for the Autonomy, and Northeast League combined (n=156).
Japan	227	The Democratic Party, Japan Restoration Party, and Social Democratic Pa combined (n=49); The Liberal Democratic Party, New Komeiro, and Ÿ Party combined (n=178).
Poland	548	Democratic Left Alliance (SLD) (n=59); Samoobrona and Polish People's Party (PSL) combined (n=27); Civic Platform (PO) (n=318); Law and Justice (Pis) (n=144).
Slovakia	407	KSS, SMER, S.O.S., SDL, and ZRS combined (The Left, n=171); SLS, SNS, and National/Ethnic combined (n=82); HZD, KDH, LS-HZDS, OKS, and SKDÚ-DS combined (Conservative Right, n=154).
Spain	292	United Left (UI) (n=44); Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) (n=127); Popular Party (PP) (n=121).

(continued)

Turkey	312	Republican People's Party (CHP) (n=99); Justice and Development Party (AKP) (n=184); Motherland Party (ANAP), Democratic Party (DP), Young Party (GP), Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and Felicity Party (SP) combined (Other right-wing, n=29).
Ukraine	541	Party of Regions (n=89); Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (n=225); Lytvyn's Bloc (n=27); Our Ukraine–People's Self Defense Bloc (n=200).
U.K.	284	Liberal Democrats (n=72); Labour (n=154); Conservatives (n=58).
U.S.	317	Democratic (n=210); Republican (n=107).